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Letter dated 16 May 2008 from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), I have the honour to convey the attached report on the international security presence in Kosovo covering the period from 1 to 29 February 2008 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring it to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ban Ki-moon

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Annex

Monthly report to the United Nations on the operations of the Kosovo Force

1. This report covers the period from 1 to 29 February 2008.

2. As at 29 February 2008, the total number of troops in theatre was 15,972. This includes 2,349 troops from non-NATO countries.

Political situation

3. The Parliament in Pristina approved a Declaration of Independence on 17 February 2008.

4. Pieter Feith was appointed as the European Union Special Representative in Kosovo on 4 February 2008.

Security situation

5. On 10 February, a demonstration was organized by the Movement for Self-Determination in Pristina with approximately 60 activists. No incidents were reported.

6. On 11 February, the Kosovo Force (KFOR) reported an explosion in Gnjilane. The most likely cause of the explosion is that a hand grenade was thrown at a Kosovo Albanian house. No casualties were reported. The Kosovo Police Service (KPS) is investigating the incident.

7. On 17 February, when Kosovo declared independence, a hand grenade exploded near an international community building in northern Mitrovica, resulting in minor material damage. High-level Serbian officials visited several Kosovo Serb majority cities and towns, some of them explicitly condoning violence. No incidents were reported. An estimated 600 to 800 Serbs gathered at Gate 3 on the Administrative Boundary Line in Multinational Task Force Centre in an attempt to enter Kosovo. Serb police turned them back without incident.

8. On 18 February, a hand grenade exploded in Multinational Task Force North close to a civil court in Zubin Potok, damaging two United Nations vehicles. Another hand grenade exploded in Mitrovica, causing no damage. Approximately 10,000 Kosovo Serbs gathered in Mitrovica to protest against independence. Kosovo Serbs also gathered to protest against independence in Gracanica, Strepce, Urosevac and Gnjilane.

9. On 19 February, Kosovo Serbs gathered and attacked Gates 1 and 31 at Brnjak and Jarinje, setting buildings on fire. No attacks on KFOR were reported. Approximately 5,000 students demonstrated in northern Mitrovica without incident.

10. On 21 February, a hand grenade exploded close to the courthouse/detention centre in Mitrovica. No casualties were reported. In Belgrade, about 150,000 demonstrated against Kosovo's declaration of independence. Looters broke into the United States embassy and set fire to an office. One protester was killed, later identified as a Serb protestor. Other embassies in Belgrade were vandalized, including the Croatian, Turkish, German and United Kingdom embassies. However,

the majority of the protesters in Belgrade remained peaceful during the government-organized demonstrations.

11. On 22 February, approximately 400 Serbs attempted to pass through Gate 1 into Kosovo. UNMIK police and KPS prevented them from entering.

12. On 23 February, shots were fired next to the courthouse in Mitrovica. Unknown persons fired gunshots at a Kosovo Albanian house in Gornji Streoc. A KPS vehicle was burned in Stepce. No injuries were reported. Several containers were placed by Kosovo Serbs along the routes from Mitrovica to Gates 1 and 31. The Commander of KFOR ordered their removal, which was completed by 24 February.

13. On 27 February, approximately 200 Kosovo Serbs gathered in Zvecan and tried to block one main supply route from Mitrovica to Gate 1 to prevent an UNMIK police convoy from passing. An unknown number of people burned tyres next to the supply route in Socania. A shooting incident occurred between two Kosovo Albanian criminal groups in Prizren, accidentally wounding one Turkish KFOR soldier.

14. Protest gatherings were held without incident in Mitrovica at 12.44 p.m. every day at Austerlitz main bridge, the courthouse and the university, and in Kosovo Serb enclaves (mainly Cracanica, Gnjilane and Strepce). The number of participants decreased from about 10,000 on 18 February to about 1,500 between 23 and 29 February.

Violence and threats against KFOR

15. During February, three incidents against KFOR were recorded but they did not involve a direct attack. The threat level against KFOR remains low while it is assessed as medium against UNMIK and the European Union.

Organized crime and weapons

16. A total of 381 incidents related to drugs (28), counterfeit currency or documents (33), smuggling (34), explosions (10), miscellaneous criminal incidents (114), illegal weapons possession (84), weapons and ammunition seizures (15) and unexploded ordnance (63) were reported during this period. The total number of incidents has decreased significantly compared to January 2008 (487).

KFOR operations

17. KFOR continued to conduct the high visibility, high profile Operation "Red Knight II" throughout Kosovo. Following incidents at several border crossing points (Gates 1, 31 and 3), KFOR launched Operations "Cold winter" and "Spring thaw", aimed at supporting UNMIK police with a minimum of one crowd and riot control platoon at each gate. Permanent vehicle checkpoints were also established on the routes from Mitrovica to the northern gates, primarily to prevent radical elements travelling from Serbia to northern Mitrovica.

18. On 22 February, KFOR supported UNMIK police in stopping several buses entering Kosovo at Gates 1 and 31, with passengers supposed to attend the daily demonstrations in northern Mitrovica. The Commander of KFOR committed the Kosovo Tactical Manoeuvre battalion to northern Mitrovica. The Multinational

Specialized Unit remained ready for public order and police duties on 30 minutes' notice to move. The Commander of KFOR also decided to reinforce Multinational Task Forces Centre and East with two manoeuvre companies each, provided by Multinational Task Forces South and West respectively. A reserve Czech company has been redeployed to reinforce Multinational Task Force Centre since 15 February. Italy decided to extend its level 3 operational reserve force battalion until 18 March. Following the operational assessment of the KFOR Commander, the readiness status of the United Kingdom and German operational reserve force battalions and of the French Strategic Reserve Force was reduced on 18 February and subsequently returned to normal status.

Compliance

19. During the month of February, there was one session of the Disciplinary Board which resulted in the dismissal of eight members of the Kosovo Protection Corps. Seven of these were from minority communities.

Kosovo Protection Corps

20. There was no recruitment campaign during February 2008.

21. On the composition of the Kosovo Protection Corps, the current active personnel establishment is 2,893. There are 190 (6.63 per cent) active ethnic minority members (166 male, 24 female) and still 113 open posts left in the active personnel establishment list. The reserve list includes 2,000 positions, 1,892 of them filled; the number of ethnic minorities is 48 (2.45 per cent).

22. A new revised training order in support of the Kosovo Protection Corps was released on 12 February, aimed at maintaining its capability as a civil emergency readiness organization until it can be disbanded. In the coming months, the focus will be to prepare the Corps for the Kosovo-wide exercise scheduled in mid-May and to make sure the Corps is ready to assist civilian populations in case of crisis. Special emphasis will be placed on preventive measures and training for dealing with wild fires.

23. During the month of February, there were three ceremonies involving 88 members of the Kosovo Protection Corps. No incidents were reported.

Conclusion

24. The situation in Kosovo, particularly in the north, has been tense since Kosovo declared its independence on 17 February, requiring KFOR to intervene at the request of UNMIK to restore and maintain safety and security on the ground. KFOR will continue to respond to any attempts to disrupt the safe and secure environment, regardless of where they come from.